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RESCUE WORK IN INDIA

E. FAITH STEWART





Yours for India's little ones,

Eg. Fraith Stewart

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Rescue Work in India

By E. Faith Stewart

Frequent visits of famine and pestilence in India greatly increase the number of orphans annually. Those left with property are quickly taken up by relatives and cared for, but those left destitute are seldom claimed by any one. Many of these die a premature death from starvation, but the fate of those who survive is miserable beyond description. Poverty drives these children to immorality in more ways than one, and the girls are in much more danger than the boys; for there is no want of unscrupulous persons who do not hesitate to take advantage of the circumstances and try to allure these helpless little ones into houses of ill-fame.

Another horrible fact is that on the famine field you will usually find the slave procurer in search of his victims. Even infants are gathered up by him and taken to the public brothels and there disposed of for a small sum. While these things are horrible, what is still more shocking is the fact that many parents themselves goaded by the pangs of extreme hunger sell their little girls to the keepers of these dens of vice for a small consideration. Void of higher instincts they dispose of their children on mere economic consideration. From these two sources hundreds of innocent little ones are annually made victims of the lowest dens of vice. That this infernal traffic in innocent girls of tender age is undermining the stability of national life in India, and sapping the very vitals out of society must be admitted. All right thinking people of India must acknowledge that this is one of the running sores of Indian moral life.

Knowing these facts we were anxious to more fully understand conditions that we might be able to do something for these unfortunate little ones. On closer investigation we learned that Cuttack, a city of about 75,000 inhabitants, in the Province of Orissa, had been for years made one of the headquarters for gathering these little ones into the brothels



The same children four months after they came to us.



Rescued as they were brought from the famine field before being placed in a den of vice,

there where they are kept until they reach the age of nine or ten years; when they are shipped like cattle to the near by cities and sold to the keepers of the larger houses of ill-fame. When once there the curtain drops between them and the outer world, and there they remain, forced to live the most degraded life of sin till death releases them. According to the Census Reports of 1919, there were over 10,000 girls under fourteen years of age, in the licensed brothels of Calcutta alone, and of this number over 1,000 were under nine years of age.

Calcutta being our nearest city, many of these poor little ones had been shipped there by the keepers of the brothels

in Cuttack.

Besides the Public Brothels we have what is known as the Temple Brothels. These are houses connected with the great heathen temples where the little temple girls are kept. The temple girls are children who have been dedicated by their parents to the gods in the temple for a life time of service.

Sometimes when a mother is praying for a son she will promise the gods that if she is blessed with one, the next baby girl will be given to the temple service. So in fulfilment of this vow, or possibly some other vow that has been made, many little jewels are carried in the arms of their mothers to the temples, and there laid on the altar as a sacrifice to the gods. These infants are cared for by the women in the temple brothels. At the age of five years these children begin their services by dancing before the gods for their amusement. When they reach the age of nine or ten years they are put into what is called a full life of service to the gods—but is in reality nothing less than a life of slavery to the passion of the priests who serve in the temple, and of the ascetics who come on pilgrimage to the temple. The life of these poor little girls is miserable beyond description.

Knowing that these horrible conditions really existed, our hearts were constrained by the love of God who is also the Father of these unfortunate little ones to open a home where we could give protection to those who were liable to fall into the hands of persons engaged in this immoral traffic; also where we could take in and protect any we might be able to

rescue and bring out of those horrible dens of vice.

Therefore Sept. 1st 1914, the doors of the Shelter, Cut-

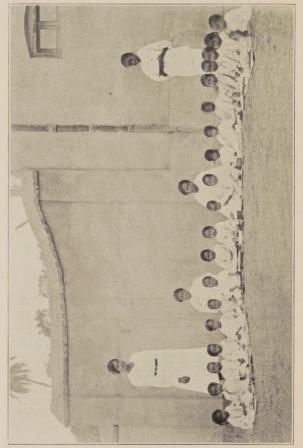


These are the fruits of our first visit to the temple brothels. The infant in front was married to the god in the temple at the age of three months and we rescued her when she was nine months old.

tack, India, were opened. Miss S. K. Mundul, an Indian lady of high birth, good education and solid Christian character offered her services for the noble work and together we opened the "home" and began a diligent search for such little ones. In the beginning we had difficulty in getting trace of such cases, or in securing them after we did have them located, but diligent, persistent effort, coupled with much prayer, brought results. Some little ones were rescued right from the slave traders before they were handed over to the brothels. In this we greatly rejoiced but we could not yet feel satisfied. We longed to stretch forth our hands and burst open the doors of the dens of vice and bring out the little lambs that were being worse than slaughtered there, and carry them to the "Shelter" where they could enjoy the happy freedom of innocent childhood, and be reared in a pure Christian atmosphere where they could grow up to noble womanhood.

Although the work was hard and slow in the beginning, still we were conscious that God was working with us, and one by one we gathered them in. We were aware, however, of the fact that unless we had the government working with us and backing us in our undertaking we would be able to accomplish but little in such a work. Therefore we prayed earnestly that God would give us favor with them, and in Dec. of the year 1918, our hearts were made thankful by receiving a letter from the government asking if I would work in the capacity of Honorary Inspectress of Police if they would invest me with authority to rescue minor girls from the Knowing that it was only the hand of God that brought this about, I gladly accepted it. At last the doors to these dens were unlocked to me and it was my privilege to enter in and bring out the precious little ones who had so long been held in bondage. From that time the work moved forward more rapidly, and we have at present one hundred and ten happy children safely housed in the "Shelter."

The first one whom we were able to rescue after she had been placed in a brothel was little Rangabati. When but two years and four months old she was sold by her mother to the keeper of the brothel for \$2.50 and a piece of cloth. After locating this child we appealed to the commissioner of the Division for assistance in rescuing her. Then in company



Our babies and their nurses.

with the Indian officer we made several trips to the place where she was, and we worked and prayed for several days before we had the joy of seeing her safe within the walls of the "Home."

In the beginning we did not plan on admitting infants into the Home, but we soon found it necessary as many infants are sold into the public brothels; and all those dedicated to temple service are babes. So if we desire to work for the overthrow of those dens of vice we must be prepared to care for the babies, therefore we opened a nursery in connection with the "home" and have had the satisfaction of seeing it filled continually. At present there are twenty little tots in the nursery. Some of these have been rescued from the temples, while many have been brought out of other dens of vice. These little ones, brought up in an atmosphere of love and purity, surrounded by tender care, little realize the fate from which they have been saved, but in years to come many of them will no doubt thank God for the day he in loving mercy reached forth his hand and saved them from the horrible life that otherwise would have been theirs.

The children of the "Shelter" attend the school that has been opened for them on the premises. We have a splendid M. V. School, well equipped, with a staff of eight teachers, Miss. S. K. Mundul, my faithful assistant is head-mistress of the school. The school is carried on according to Government code, and is under Government Inspection. In Dec. of this year we hope to have our first graduating exercises and the two dear girls who will pass will both be sent to Calcutta to continue their studies, one as a student in High School and the other to take a two years' course in Teachers Training. If God spares them, they both expect to return to help in this blessed work. In addition to the educational work we also have a splendid Industrial class where the girls who are unable to properly carry on their studies are taught sewing, fancy-work, basket- and fan-weaving. This class is doing good work and we believe in the near future the girls of this class will be self supporting. In connection with the Industrial work we also have classes where the girls are given thorough instructions in cooking and general house-work, and where they are given training in nursing. By the cheerful help of these Industrial girls the

temporal work of the entire Institution is beautifully carried on.

While much of our time is required in directing the temporal and educational side of the work, yet we have realized from the beginning that the most important thing was the moral and spiritual training, and no means have been spared to get the needed help to the girls. The Bible is systematically taught in the school the same as any other study. Much time is given to the girls both individually and collectively in teaching them the principles of a noble Christian life, and our hearts have been made to rejoice as we have seen the older girls, one by one give their hearts and lives to the Lord. The majority of those who have reached the age where they can understand spiritual things are leading earnest, consistent Christian lives, and their hearts are filled with deep gratitude to God for saving them from the fate that would have been theirs. Surely all heaven must rejoice over the redemption of these little ones.

In the early days the work was carried on in rented buildings but we keenly felt the need of having a place of our own. with buildings fitted to the needs of this work. This matter was held before the Lord until he began working in a marvelous way to bring it about. In August of 1917 we secured a beautiful plot of land containing seven acres, and began building and pushing the work just as fast as God supplied the means. Through the assistance of kind friends in America and elsewhere, and liberal grants received from the Government, we have been able to put up splendid buildings just suited to the needs of this special work. The main building furnishes accommodations for eighty girls and the staff of workers. The 2nd building accommodates forty children, and in each of these buildings we have a segregation ward. No. 3 is the nursery building where at present twenty little tots are being safely sheltered. Then, too, we have an Industrial building of four rooms, but at present this is being used to accommodate some of the higher grades in the school, while the Industrial classes, kindergartens and lower primary classes of the school are carried on in the verandas of the larger buildings and under temporary sheds in the compound as we have been unable to erect the much needed school building. We are trusting that soon we shall be able to have a proper



Some of our older girls.

building for the school. Then the educational work can be better cared for.

We are now in the eighth year of the work and as we look back we can not help but feel that the hand of God has rested on it from the beginning and surely he has led in a marvelous way. Many times as we look into the pure sweet faces of these dear girls and then for a moment allow ourselves to picture them in the conditions in which they would have been living if God had not enabled us to rescue them, the tears unbidden freely flow. We are truly thankful for the success that has attended our efforts, but as we look out over the great field before us and think of the hundreds of helpless little ones who are yet held in awful bondage in

those horrible dens of vice right in the one small province in which our work is located, disregarding the great number in other parts of India, we are made to cry out that God will send more means and workers for this special line of work. What has been done is as a drop in a bucket compared to the great need. Although the need is so great, this line of work has scarcely been touched. With the exception of a home in South India, under the supervision of Amy Wilson-Carmichael, ours is the only institution of its kind in all India. In the beginning few words of encouragement found the way to our ears and Miss Mundul and I were practically left to push the work alone. The majority of people did not believe such conditions existed, and those who did know the truth only shook their heads and said nothing could be done. The Honorable Mr. L. Mesurier, whose name appears later in the report who was at that time our commissioner, but is now a member of council, together with his wife were the first friends whom God raised up for this work. Their kind help and words of encouragement shall never be forgotten.

As we do not admit girls over ten years of age, the problems of the work in the early days were small, but as the girls grow older, we find ourselves from time to time facing some weighty matters, problems that can not be laid aside, but must be solved. One that confronts us at present is the marriage of the girls. In India custom is such that there is little in life for a girl if she does not marry. In our Christian lands where woman has equal rights with man, girls with the splendid training that those in the Shelter are receiving could go out in the world and earn their own living, but not so in India. Teaching is the only vocation open to them and there are now about three teachers waiting for every vacancy. As the girls in India do not have the freedom that the girls of America do, but live in seclusion, seldom going out of their own homes, absolutely the only thing left for them is marriage. Since the girls in the Shelter were rescued and brought in while still very young and innocent, we owe to them the same chance in life that others have, and if we do not plan some way whereby we can give them in marriage, then the burden falls on us to continue supporting them even after they are grown. This would eventually bar us from admitting any more little ones as the home would be filled with



Children and Teachers in the Shelter at Cuttack.



CUTTACK.

Lune 5th 1921

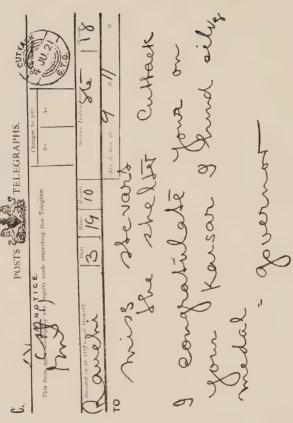
Dear Miss Stewart

I was very pleased to be in
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Yours Sinculy John F. Summil

grown girls. We must have an outlet for these girls so we can continue taking in other little tots, thus saving them from such a horrible fate and fitting them for a life of usefulness. But the question that has often presented itself to us is, where shall we find suitable husbands for our girls? We can not give these noble educated Christian girls in marriage to heathen men, because the women in Hindu homes are not supposed to have voice in anything but must without question strictly obey their husbands in everything. If one of our girls desired to marry a Hindu she would have to sacrifice every Christian principle in the beginning, and submit to a heathen marriage ceremony. Then after marriage she would be forced to bow down in worship before their idols and to submit to all of their heathen customs. It would be impossible to even do thus in outward form without sacrificing their conscience and losing their own soul. Again, in Christian lands, our young women meet with people and form their own friendships which lead to matrimony. This is not true in India. The girls are kept in seclusion in their own homes, and do not go out in public. If they attend school, from the time they are eight years of age they must attend a school for girls only. All conditions are such that bar them from forming acquaintances with the opposite sex. The parents or guardians always plan for their marriage. A Christian girl will likely know whom she is to marry and in most cases will have the privilege of meeting the one she is to marry a time or two and engaging in a few moments conversation, but that is all. So those who live in such institutions as the Shelter are under the guardianship of the missionary in charge, and that missionary is entirely responsible to plan for the marriage of those in her care.

There is, therefore, only one solution to this tremendous problem. We must have a home for boys where we can rear and train Christian husbands for our girls. If we can open a home some little distance from the one we now have for girls and there take in small orphan boys, surround them with strong Christian influence, give them elementary education, then have them taught good trades, thus fitting them for an independent life, we can thus give our girls to them in marriage, and they will form their own Christian community. Think what this would mean both to our dear girls and



N. B.—The name of the Sender, if telegraphed, is written after the text Sci Chand & Sons=622-225 go -2,500,000 Rts. (Figh. 11).

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to the community in which they live. It will place the girls in a position where they can have something to live for and where their lives will broaden out and be a blessing to humanity. Who can measure the good it will be to the community if in a few short years we could have as the fruit of these two schools more than one hundred Christian homes. What a power for good this would be. One hundred homes shining out for God in the midst of heathen darkness. This is the plan on which the Roman Catholics and others have worked, and they have the results. We, too, can have results if we work to the same plan. But unless we do open a boy's home and rear Christian husbands for these girls, we shall in the end lose much of what God has designed to accomplish through this work.

But it requires money to open and sustain an institution of this kind. It will require a sum of thirty thousand dollars to erect buildings and establish a home. Having put our hands to the work, we feel we dare not draw back; and at present we are where we can not go forward unless God opens the way before us. And as he has ordained that his children should be workers together with him, I take the liberty of bringing this great need before the friends of such a cause in Christian America.

The burden of my heart is to be able during this year while at home on furlough to raise the amount needed to open the boys' home on my return to India. I therefore earnestly appeal to you that you will help us in raising this fund for the boys' school and thus assist in rescuing and leading to pure, noble womanhood other little jewels who have fallen victims of the immoral traffic in minor girls that is so extensively carried on in dark India.

I shall be glad to correspond with any church or society who may desire a lecture on this work; or to correspond with, or make personal visits to individuals who desire further information.

Kindly send all donations and address all communications to E. Faith Stewart, Anderson Bible Training-School, Anderson, Indiana.

(Excerpt of letter from H. Le Mesurier, Member of Council)

Ranchi, B. N. R., 6th June, 1921.

Dear Miss Stewart:

It is long since any public notification gave me so much pleasure as that announcing that the Viceroy (of course on the recommendation of this Government) had conferred upon you the silver Kaisar i Hind medal for public service in recognition of your admirable and courageous work as Superintendent of the Shelter at Cuttack.

I offer you our hearty congratulations and ardent hopes and prayers for your long life and the continued success and prosperity of your good work.

Yours very sincerely,

Signed: H. Le Mesurier.



HOW CAN I ALONE MAKE AN APPEAL?

Our only boy, who was brought to us almost dead from starvation, at the age of five months, his mother having already died. But we can have many others as soon as we have the means with which to care for them.



